NUMB. LXXVII.

The SPECTATOR.

Non convivere licet, nec Urbe tota
Quiſquam eſt tam propè tam proculq; nobis. Mart.

Tueſday, May 29. 1711.

MY Friend WILL. HONEYCOMBE is one of thoſe Sort of Men who are very often abſent in Converſation, and what the *French* call *a reveur* and *a diſtrait*. A little before our Club-time laſt Night we were walking together in *Somerſet* Garden, where WILL. had taken up a ſmall Pebble of ſo odd a make, that he told me he would preſent it to a Friend of his, an eminent Virtuoſo. After we had walked ſome time, I made a full ſtop with my Face towards the Weſt, which WILL. knowing to be my uſual Method of asking what's a Clock, in an Afternoon, immediately pulled out his Watch, and told me we had ſeven Minutes paſt. We took a turn or two more, when, to my great Surprize, I ſaw him ſquirr away his Watch a conſiderable way into the *Thames*, and with great Sedateneſs in his Looks put up the Pebble, he had before found, in his Fob. As I have naturally an Averſion to much Speaking, and do not love to be the Meſſenger of ill News, eſpecially when it comes too late to be uſeful, I left him to be convinced of his Miſtake in due time, and continued my Walk, reflecting on theſe little Abſences and Diſtractions in Mankind, and reſolving to make them the Subject of a future Speculation.

I was the more confirmed in my Deſign, when I conſidered that they were very often Blemiſhes in the Characters of Men of Excellent Senſe; and helped to keep up the Reputation of that *Latin* Proverb, which Mr. *Dryden* has Tranſlated in the following Lines:

Great Wit to Madneſs ſure is near ally'd,
And thin Partitions do their Bounds divide.

My Reader does, I hope, perceive, that I diſtinguiſh a Man who is *Abſent*, becauſe he thinks of ſomething elſe, from one who is *Abſent*, becauſe he thinks of nothing at all: The latter is too Innocent a Creature to be taken notice of; but the Diſtractions of the former may, I believe, be generally accounted for from one of theſe Reaſons.

Either their Minds are wholly fixed on ſome particular Science, which is often the Caſe of Mathematicians and other Learned Men; or are wholly taken up with ſome violent Paſſion, ſuch as Anger, Fear, or Love, which ties the Mind to ſome diſtant Object; or, laſtly, theſe Diſtractions proceed from a certain Vivacity and Fickleneſs in a Man's Temper, which while it raiſes up infinite Numbers of *Idea*'s in the Mind, is continually puſhing it on, without allowing it to reſt on any particular Image. Nothing therefore is more unnatural than the Thoughts and Conceptions of ſuch a Man, which are ſeldom occaſioned either by the Company he is in, or any of thoſe Objects which are placed before him. While you fancy he is Admiring a Beautiful Woman, 'tis an even Wager that he is ſolving a Propoſition in *Euclid*; and while you may imagine he is reading the *Paris Gazette*, 'tis far from being impoſſible that he is pulling down and rebuilding the Front of his Country-Houſe.

At the ſame time that I am endeavouring to expoſe this Weakneſs in others, I ſhall readily confeſs that I once laboured under the ſame Infirmity my ſelf. The Method I took to Conquer it was a firm Reſolution to learn ſomething from whatever I was obliged to ſee or hear. There is a way of Thinking, if a Man can attain to it, by which he may ſtrike ſomewhat out of any thing. I can at preſent obſerve thoſe Starts of good Senſe and Struggles of unimproved Reaſon in the Converſation of a Clown, with as much Satisfaction as the moſt ſhining Periods of the moſt finiſhed Orator; and can make a ſhift to command my Attention at a *Puppet-Show* or an *Opera*, as well as at *Hamlet* or *Othello*. I always make one of the Company I am in; for though I ſay little my ſelf, my Attention to others, and thoſe Nods of Approbation which I never beſtow unmerited, ſufficiently ſhew that I am among them. Whereas WILL. HONEYCOMBE, tho' a Fellow of good Senſe, is every Day doing and ſaying an hundred Things, which he afterwards confeſſes, with a well-bred Frankneſs, were ſomewhat *mal a propos*, and undeſigned.

I chanced the other Day to go into a Coffee-houſe, where WILL. was ſtanding in the midſt of ſeveral Auditors whom he had gathered round him, and was giving them an Account of the Perſon and Character of *Moll Hinton*. My Appearance before him juſt put him in mind of me, without making him reflect that I was actually preſent. So that keeping his Eyes full upon me, to the great Surprize of his Audience, he broke off his firſt Harangue, and proceeded thus, — 'Why now there's 'my Friend (mentioning me by Name) he is a Fel-'low that thinks a great deal, but never opens his 'Mouth; I warrant you he is now thruſting his ſhort 'Face into ſome Coffee-houſe about *'Change*. I was 'his Bail in the time of the *Popiſh-Plot*, when he was 'taken up for a Jeſuit.' If he had looked on me a little longer, he had certainly deſcribed me ſo particularly, without ever conſidering what led him into it, that the whole Company muſt neceſſarily have found me out; for which reaſon, remembring the old Proverb, *Out of Sight out of Mind*, I left the Room; and

and upon meeting him an Hour afterwards, was asked by him, with a great deal of good Humour, in what Part of the World I had lived, that he had not seen me these three Days.

Monsieur *Bruyere* has given us the Character of *an absent Man*, with a great deal of Humour, which he has pushed to an agreeable Extravagance; with the Heads of it I shall conclude my present Paper.

'*Menalcas* (says that excellent Author) comes 'down in a Morning, opens his Door to go out, 'but shuts it again, because he perceives that he has 'his Night-cap on; and examining himself further 'finds that he is but half shaved, that he has 'stuck his Sword on his right side, that his Stock-'ings are about his Heels, and that his Shirt is 'over his Breeches. When he is dress'd he goes 'to Court, comes into the Drawing-room, and 'walking bolt upright under a branch of Candle-'sticks his Wigg is caught up by one of them, and 'hangs dangling in the Air. All the Courtiers 'fall a laughing, but *Menalcas* laughs louder than 'any of them, and looks about for the Person that 'is the Jest of the Company. Coming down to 'the Court-gate, he finds a Coach, which taking for 'his own, he whips into it, and the Coachman 'drives off, not doubting but he carries his Ma-'ster. As soon as he stops, *Menalcas* throws 'himself out of the Coach, crosses the Court, as-'cends the Stair-case, and runs thro' all the Cham-'bers with the greatest Familiarity, reposes him-'self on a Couch, and fancies himself at home. 'The Master of the House at last comes in, *Me-'nalcas* rises to receive him, and desires him to 'sit down; he talks, muses, and then talks again. 'The Gentleman of the House is tired and ama-'zed; *Menalcas* is no less so, but is every Moment 'in hopes that his impertinent Guest will at last end 'his tedious Visit. Night comes on, when *Menal-'cas* is hardly undeceived.

'When he is playing at Backgammon, he calls 'for a full Glass of Wine and Water; 'tis his turn 'to throw, he has the Box in one Hand and his 'Glass in the other, and being extreamly dry, and 'unwilling to lose Time, he swallows down both 'the Dice, and at the same time throws his Wine 'into the Tables. He writes a Letter, and flings 'the Sand into the Ink-bottle; he writes a second, 'and mistakes the Superscription: A Noble-man 'receives one of them, and upon opening it reads 'as follows. *I would have you, honest* Jack, *imme-'diately upon the Receipt of this, take in Hay enough 'to serve me the Winter.* His Farmer receives the 'other, and is amazed to see in it, *My Lord, I re-'ceived your Grace's Commands with an intire Sub-'mission to* — If he is at an Entertainment, you 'may see the Pieces of Bread continually multiply-'ing round his Plate: 'Tis true, the rest of the 'Company want it, as well as their Knives and 'Forks, which *Menalcas* does not let them keep 'long. Sometimes in a Morning he puts his whole 'Family in an hurry, and at last goes out without 'being able to stay for his Coach or Dinner; and 'for that Day you may see him in every part of the 'Town, except the very Place where he had ap-'pointed to be upon a Business of Importance. You 'would often take him for every thing that he is 'not; for a Fellow quite Stupid, for he hears no-'thing; for a Fool, for he talks to himself, and has 'an hundred Grimaces and Motions with his Head 'which are altogether involuntary; for a proud 'Man, for he looks full upon you, and takes no 'notice of your Saluting him: The Truth on't is, 'his Eyes are open, but he makes no use of them, 'and neither sees you, nor any Man, nor any thing 'else. He came once from his Country-house, and 'his own Footmen undertook to rob him, and 'succeeded: They held a Flambeau to his Throat, 'and bid him deliver his Purse; he did so, and 'coming home told his Friends he had been rob-'bed; they desire to know the Particulars. Ask my 'Servants, says *Menalcas*, for they were with 'me.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

For the Benefit of Mr. Elrington and Mrs. Mills.

At the Desire of several Ladies of Quality.

By Her Majesty's Company of Comedians.

AT the Theatre Royal in Drury-lane, this present Tuesday, the 29th of May, will be presented a Comedy, called, The Gamester. The part of the Gamester to be perform'd by Mrs. Mills, (first time) by Mr. Pack, Sir Thomas Valere by Mr. Bullock, the Marquess Hazard by Mr. Bowen, Count Cog-Die by Mr. Bullock, jun. Lady Wealthy by Mrs. Porter, Angelica by Mrs. Bradshaw, Mrs. Security by Mrs. Willis, Favourite by Mrs. Mills, Bookkeeper to the Gaming-Table by Mr. Leigh.

This Play is sold by Jacob Tonson at Shakespear's Head over-against Catherine-street in the Strand.

The Entertainment of Musick, consisting of a Poem, call'd, The Passion of Sappho, Written by Mr. Harrison, and The Feast of Alexander, Written by Mr. Dryden; as they are Set to Musick by Mr. Thomas Clayton (Author of Arsinoe) will be Performed at his House in York-Buildings, this Day, being the 29th Instant, beginning at 8 in the Evening. Tickets at 5 s. each, may be had at Mr. Charles Lillie's, the Corner of Beauford-Buildings, and at Mr. Elise's St. James's Coffee-house. No Money receiv'd, or Tickets given out at the House.

This Poem is Sold by Jacob Tonson, at Shakespear's Head over-against Catherine-street in the Strand.

Just Publish'd,

An Account of the present State and Government of the Empire of Germany: In a Letter to Thomas Foley of Whitley in the County of Worcester, Esq; by M. Le Vassor. Printed for Jacob Tonson at Shakespear's Head over-against Catherine-street in the Strand.

To be Sold, at a lower Rate than ordinary, at the Queen's Head, joining to the Church Gate in Bedford-street, Covent-Garden, all Sorts of Druggets, Hair and Worsted Camlets, Sagathies, Duroys, Shagreens, Shallloons, Durants, Padua Serges, Shags, Serges de Nisms, Calamancoes, and all other Goods fit for Mens Apparel. The Person who now keep the Shop designing to leave off the Trade, and the House and Shop to be Lett at Michaelmas next.

A convenient House to be Lett at East-Acton in Middlesex, four Rooms on a Floor, wall'd in, with Coach-house, Stabling, Orchard, Garden, and all Conveniencies belonging to it, in very good Repair. Whosoever takes it may come into it as soon as they please. Inquire at Mr. Lumley's, or at the House, both in East-Acton aforesaid.

All sorts of Silk Gowns, being a fresh Parcel of rich Brocades, Venetians, Tissues, Tabbies, Damasks and Sattins, bought up the last Sale, and made into Gowns, with gentile and suitable Linings, to be Sold very cheap at Mrs. Attaway's in Devereux Court in the Passage from the Temple to Essex Buildings, the lowest Price being writ upon each Gown. Note, there is a fresh Parcel of thread Sattin Gowns lined with thread Sattins.

A most Incomparable Paste for the Hands, far exceeding any thing ever yet in Print: It makes them Delicately white, soft and plump; fortifies them against the Scorching heat of the Fire or Sun, and Sharpness of the Wind. A Hand cannot be so spoil'd but the use of it will recover them. Sold only at Mr. Allerton's Toy-shop, over against the Royal Exchange, at 1 s. 6 d. a pot, with Directions; where is also sold the excellent German powder for the Scurvy in the Gums and Teeth which by only scouring them every Morning, whitens and fastens the Teeth to a Miracle, at 1 s. a Box.

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